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FORCE PROTECTION IN PEACE OPERATIONS

BY

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ABSTRACT

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During the post-Cold War period, peace operations have driven the OPTEMPO for all services faster and farther than anyone could have projected. Politically sensitive, peace operations force commanders to think not only of the tactical and operational ramifications of the employment of their forces, but the psychological effect on the local populace and public opinion of the people back home. In light of that, commanders at all levels are becoming extremely sensitized to the force protection aspect of the mission. The result is force protection has assumed a wide encompassing identity of its own that is impacting on mission performance. This paper will look at the lessons learned from various peacekeeping operations and determine the commonality of the operations that have succeeded, and those that have not, and the reasons why. The study's intent is to determine whether there is a void in our doctrine and generate discussion for change as necessary.

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Introduction

"Multilateral peace operations are an important component of our (National Security) strategy. From traditional peacekeeping to peace enforcement, multilateral peace operations are sometimes the best way to prevent, contain or resolve conflicts that could otherwise be far more costly and deadly...Peace operations often have served, and continue to serve, important U.S. national interests..."¹

Based on the President's 1996 National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement, peacekeeping operations will continue to play an important and critical role for the United States as we embark on a strategy of active engagement abroad. In order to support this objective we must be prepared to execute the full range of peace operations that meet the interests of the United States throughout a volatile global environment.

Understandably, peacekeeping operations are not always a popular mission with the general public nor with the military. Most often, unless the American public "can visualize" the need for such a mission through a vigorous media campaign, they are not very willing to send "their sons and daughters" to foreign lands to intervene in another country's domestic problems.

For many of our warrior purists, peacekeeping is hardly a military mission. This is particularly true in the wake of Operation Desert Storm. Soldiers are often ill at ease in a quasi-political-diplomatic arena where there are few clear-cut objectives, no recognizable enemy, and no glory. This is a nontraditional mission soldiers seldom clearly understand.² (The

general term "soldiers" is meant to include marines, sailors and airmen and women as well.)

A key statement made by the President in the employment of U.S. soldiers to peacekeeping operations in his National Security Strategy states:

"...we will ensure that the risks to U.S. personnel ...governing the participation of American...forces are acceptable to the United States."³

This is an extremely important statement in that the security of our forces will greatly influence the decision-making process as to whether the United States will participate in a particular peacekeeping operation.

Based on the remarkable results achieved during Operation Desert Storm, an unrealistic baseline has been established for future military operations. The American people are no longer willing to accept large losses of American soldier's lives as a part of doing business. We have seen in the bombing of the Marine Headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon, 1983, and during Operation RESTORE HOPE, Somalia, 1993, the impact of a great loss of American lives can have on the overall accomplishment of a peace operation. Whether the original objectives of the mission were accomplished or not, the loss of American lives precipitated the removal of American forces from these two operations.

Fortunately, we have learned the hard lessons from these tragic incidents. The mission success achieved in subsequent peace operations can be attributed to the increased level of

emphasis given to protecting the force, or better known as force protection.

A quote from MG William Nash, Commander, Task Force Eagle, Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR, Bosnia-Herzegovina, fully captures the essence and criticality that force protection now plays in peace operations. The tactical mission success he has achieved in such a volatile environment can be in part attributed to the command emphasis that he has placed on "protecting the force."

"...force protection...goes to the heart of our successful mission accomplishment. Our ability to avoid casualties, to protect the force, will directly impact upon our ability to successfully perform the peace enforcement mission. And there're two aspects of that...that compound our ability, that directly lend themselves to mission accomplishment in force protection. The first, of course, has to do with the will of the American people to sustain this operation. And...as the American people and the leadership of the nation see success -- with minimal casualties -- their propensity to support the operation will remain high. Second, as the Former Warring Factions see our ability to conduct operations without sustaining casualties, it adds to our "aura" of proficiency and competence on the part of the NATO forces, in particular, American forces. And that gives us even greater, if you will, moral ascendancy over them, as we go about our business. So the force protection, while it is a sufficiently important subject on its own right, it also is a major contributor to our combat power in accomplishing our mission."⁴

No longer does force protection play a secondary role in the conduct of military operations. Force protection is now fully integrated into all aspects of military operations, whether it be in garrison, field training, military operations other than war, or combat.

Based on force protection's increasing role in peace operations, there is a need to fully develop doctrinal based concepts and tactics, techniques and procedures that will be required for the successful conduct of future military peace operations. Specifically, this paper will address force protection doctrinal issues and lessons learned from past and current peace operations for integration into future operations.

Focusing the Issue

Defining the issue of force protection in peace operations can in itself can be confusing. Currently, U.S. concepts, doctrine, and training for peace operations are in disarray. There has not been widespread understanding of the subtleties and unique challenges of peace operations; and the concepts, doctrine, organizational and training implications of these operations have yet to be fully addressed.⁵

For consistency this paper will define peace operations as "military operations to support diplomatic efforts to reach a long-term political settlement and categorized as peacekeeping operations (PKO) and peace enforcement operations." Military peace operations are tailored to each situation and may be conducted in support of diplomatic activities before, during, or after conflict.⁶

Secondly, couple that with the continuing evolving concept of force protection throughout the Army based on recent

experiences and ideas. No two Army manuals that define "force protection" have the same definitions.⁷ Perhaps that is because there are numerous agencies throughout DOD that are responsible for doctrine and coordination between them is lacking.

Field Manual 100-23, Peace Operations, states that "force protection consists of operations security (OPSEC), deception, health and morale, safety, and avoidance of fratricide."⁸ Under this umbrella, the term of force protection within this concept encompasses the total aspect of protecting the soldier and his/her environment.

Case Studies

Two case studies that provide us with the hard lessons learned in the development of a force protection doctrine in a peace operation environment are the 1983 bombing of the Marine Headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon, and the 1996 bombing of Khobar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. While there are several U.S. policy issues that could be addressed in these case studies, our focus is to look at them from the military perspective as they apply to this paper.

Beirut Bombing

On 29 September 1982, the U.S. Marines landed at the Port of Beirut as part of the Multinational Force in an effort to facilitate the withdrawal of foreign military forces from Lebanon and to assist the Lebanese Government and the Lebanese Armed

Forces (LAF) in establishing sovereignty and authority over the Beirut area. The 1,200-man Marine contingent occupied positions in the vicinity of Beirut International Airport (BIA) as an interpositional force between the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) and populated areas of Beirut. Initially, the force was warmly welcomed by the local populace. The environment was essentially benign and continued that way into the spring of 1983. The operation was intended to be of short duration.

At approximately 0622 hours, 23 October 1983, the Marines Battalion Landing Team (BLT) Headquarters building at BIA was destroyed by a terrorist bomb. The catastrophic attack took the lives of 241 U.S. military personnel and wounded over 100 others. The bombing was carried out by a lone terrorist driving a truck that crashed through a barbed wire and concertina fence, passed between two Marine guard posts without being engaged by fire, entered an open gate, passed around one sewer pipe barrier and between two others, flattened the Sergeant of the Guard's sandbagged booth at the building's entrance, and penetrated into the central lobby of the building, where it exploded. The force of the explosion ripped the building from its foundation and then imploded upon itself. Almost all of the occupants were crushed or trapped inside the wreckage.

The attack raises the issue of how can American forces in similar situations be protected against terrorist attacks. On the preventive side, the U.S. needs to devote more attention to

the physical security of its personnel, facilities, and weapons, as well as improve the reporting and analysis of information on the threat and their actions.

As the U.S. deploys in force in support of peace operations, we have to be cognizant of marginal, immediate threats as a minimum, most likely terrorists or insurgency forces, simply because of our presence. Physical protection against this type of threat can pose a number of problems.

These groups may be hard to predict and hard to penetrate. It is mainly a matter of human intelligence. There is a high noise level of threats, few of which materialize, few of which can be ignored. The U.S. Marines in Lebanon had received over a hundred bomb threats or warnings of possible terrorist bombings prior to the destruction of Marine Headquarters.

Moreover, there is a basic asymmetry. Terrorists can attack anything, anywhere, at anytime. Military commanders cannot protect everything, everywhere, all of the time. It is a certainty that terrorists will attack the least defended target. It is a virtual certainty that there will always be a vulnerable target.⁹

Physical protection against every conceivable kind of terrorist attack can be extremely costly. At a certain point, the requirements of force protection can not only divert manpower from their primary mission, but render those defended incapable of performing their primary mission. Military bases that are

installed to maintain peace operations, are turned into armed fortresses and encampments, creating a secondary effect on the civilian population we are there to protect. It will be up to the force commander who determines the impact of the threat on his response and mission performance.¹⁰

Khobar Towers Bombing

With today's strategy of engagement and enlargement, the U.S. is committed to the security of friends and allies throughout the world in an effort to develop a community of nations with shared interests in peace and stability. Their presence demonstrates U.S. commitment to the security of these friends and allies and grants the U.S. access to critical facilities needed to defend its vital interests. Executing the national strategy requires the physical presence of U.S. forces in many nations, exposing them to a variety of hostile acts.¹¹

The inability of enemies to directly challenge U.S. and allied military power directly leads to the asymmetric use of force to deter U.S. initiatives, attack forward deployed forces, and intended to weaken U.S. resolve by influencing public and congressional opinion in the United States.

On June 25, 1996, a terrorist truck bomb, estimated to contain the equivalent of 3,000 to 8,000 pounds of TNT, exploded outside the northern perimeter of Khobar Towers, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, a facility housing U.S. and Allied forces supporting the

coalition air operation over Iraq, Operation SOUTHERN WATCH. There were 19 fatalities and approximately 500 wounded. The perpetrators escaped.¹² The ensuing investigation led by General (Retired) Wayne A. Downing and published by the Downing Assessment Task Force, revealed various flaws in the Department of Defense's doctrine and policies in addressing force protection. While the report's comments pertain directly to U.S. Central Command, many of the issues are systemic in nature and could easily apply to all U.S. forces anywhere.

Foremost was the requirement of the Department of Defense to establish prescriptive physical security standards. While DoD Handbook 0-2000.12H, Protection of DoD Personnel and Activities Against Acts of Terrorism and Political Turbulence, provides suggested actions that service components should consider in their efforts to combat terrorism, it lacks specific standards of performance, leaving it to the separate field commanders to interpret their own subjective determination of force protection. Areas specifically requiring DoD standardization include: frequency of vulnerability assessments; new construction and modification of existing structures of buildings for soldiers to occupy; stand-off distances for barriers; significance of bomb blast effects; and warning systems.

While resourcing and funding was not identified as a problem for U.S. Central Command, nor were they priorities. As a result, combatant commanders were encouraged to articulate and prioritize

force protection requirements in their Integrated Priorities List (IPL). Previously units in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were taking full advantage of resources available through Foreign Military Sales cases, host nation support, and assistance-in-kind. This reduced the amount of DoD funding requested through the service budget process for force protection.

Force protection procedures were inconsistent throughout the command. Tactics and techniques varied among the various U.S. locations such as entry procedures. Though installations were under the same Threat Condition, the procedures for entering widely differed. Impacting on tactics and techniques was the availability of manning for security. This contributed to the requirement for host-nation and other foreign nationals to maintain adequate security at U.S. installations. Additionally, there were no specific guidance, directives, or train programs for security or guard forces.

The Hard Lessons

Despite the difference in time for both bombings, there are significant lessons learned from both scenarios that must be captured to preclude a reoccurrence. Simultaneously, we must look at "what works." Commanders involved in Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR have attained a level of success through an aggressive force protection program that to date has achieved its goals.

A key finding by the Downing Assessment Task Force that can be related to the Beirut and Khobar Towers bombings is the ability of the theater and national intelligence community to conduct in-depth, long term analysis of trends, intentions, and capabilities of terrorists. While the Marines in Beirut were deluged with raw intelligence reports about terrorist threats, they were never provided with the expertise required to evaluate them. Similarly, forces at Khobar Towers lacked similar support at the component command and military department level due to other priority commitments. This is particularly critical in the realm of terrorism analysis which must promote insight and anticipation of future potential, not just repetition of historical anecdote.¹³

Due to a lack of theater-specific training guidance for individuals or units deploying to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, the level of force protection readiness varied greatly among the service components. There was a dependence on the service component commanders to conduct pre-deployment training to prepare and train their own soldiers deploying to southwest Asia. In contrast, U.S. European Command developed and directed minimum standards of preparation and training for units and individuals deploying to Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR in Former Yugoslavia.¹⁴ Prior to deployment, units underwent training at the Combat Maneuver Training Center (CMTC), in Hohenfels, Germany. The CMTC cadre executed a series of scenarios that

prepared deploying troops for what they may encounter in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Based on after action reports, it is clear that this pre-deployment training program heightened soldiers' situational awareness through numerous and often simultaneous stressful scenarios.

Security is just as important during peace operations as it is during normal military operations. A critical ingredient toward a successful peace operation is the ability for the peace enforcement forces to remain objective and impartial in the performance of their mission. Peace operations implies neutrality. If one side of the belligerents suspects that the mediating force, either deliberately or inadvertently, is giving information or assistance to the other, it may be accused of espionage and one or both parties to the dispute may become so uncooperative as to jeopardize the success of the operation.¹⁵ One of the more influential factors in the bombing of the Marine Headquarters in Beirut was the perceived loss of the Marine's impartiality, once they called for naval gunfire in support of President Gemayel's government forces.¹⁶ With the loss of our legitimacy as a peacekeeper, the whole mission's purpose changed, and accordingly, the level of force protection.

During Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR, the driving force behind the continuing force protection awareness was the establishment of a Force Protection Working Group (FPWG). Chaired by the task force Chief of Staff, this group was comprised of representatives

from the various task force staff sections to include: safety, preventive medicine, military police, military intelligence, fire protection, base camp mayor, and other sections as appropriate.¹⁷ This group resembles that of any installation safety council that easily transformed its mission to that of protecting the force in a contingency operations environment. It is through this group that the level of force protection consciousness is raised among all members of the task force. Issues covered included the threat, force protection levels, survivability in static and mobile operations, and soldier health issues. Again, this is reflective of the commander's emphasis and priorities in accomplishing his mission. This basic concept can be and should be implemented in all future peace operations.

Cultural Integration

Force protection is a necessary task that makes soldiers uncomfortable, slows down military operations, and taxes resources. It requires leaders and soldiers who are disciplined and trained to incorporate force protection as a way of life...a part of their culture. Successfully integrating force protection doesn't simply begin with an alert for a deployment. It is a skill or series of skills that are ingrained when the leader or soldier is assigned to the unit. At the tactical level it starts at the top and is driven downward.

The physical and emotional demands placed on soldiers during the first 60 days of Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR were rigorous and tough. Problems with field craft skills, most notably field sanitation and survivability techniques, made acclimation to the austere field environment difficult.¹⁸ Therefore, a critical aspect of force protection ensures the proper maintenance of soldiers who are physically fit, emotionally sound, and armed with a high level of proficiency in their field skills and possess the ability to adapt to their environment under difficult conditions. Force protection skills have to be practiced until they become inherent to the unit and individual soldier.

Survivability practices and techniques have to be established and practiced until they are a matter of routine. Personal awareness is the single most proactive antiterrorism measure a soldier can perform. Coupled with physical security measures, individual awareness will neutralize any terrorist plans. Physical security includes the construction and integration of defensive positions and protective shelters. All soldiers need a shelter for protection when receiving artillery, mortar and rocket fire.

Installation security shortfalls contributed to the failure of force protection during the Beirut and Khobar Tower Bombings. As commanders establish base camps and move into work facilities, they must balance their security measures with the type of threat posed by the belligerent groups in their area. This applies both

in the relative security of forward operating bases and at assigned facilities within cities. Force protection, or in particular survivability operations, require increased engineering support. The expertise of the staff engineer or advisor becomes more critical as they certify the design and construction of base camps and bunkers. The initial OPTEMPO of a stability operation may not permit immediate construction of force protection structures, but it is the continuous improvement and hardening of positions that is critical to survival. This in turn directly correlates to soldier confidence in performing their mission.

Recommendations

It is difficult at best to wrap our arms around this issue called "force protection," made more obvious by the lack of an assigned proponent for so many years in the Department of Defense. Subsequent to the Khobar Towers bombing, Secretary of Defense William J. Perry has designated the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the principal adviser and the single DoD-wide focal point for force protection activities. A force protection element within the J-3 of the Joint Staff will perform this function. As the primary high-level advocate for force protection, the chairman will help ensure this requirement receives the visibility along with other mission goals as they plan military operations. The chairman will also ensure adequate

force protection is a top priority for every commander at every level within our military organization and that commanders will be empowered to ensure that force protection measures respond to the unique situation on the ground. It also ensures that force protection receives a high priority in budgetary allocations. As representative of the joint forces, the chairman is also in the position to ensure a joint and uniform approach to force protection throughout the service components.

Additionally, he has moved force protection responsibilities from the Department of State to the Department of Defense where possible. In some cases, the Department of State rather than the Department of Defense is responsible for the security of military forces overseas, including force protection. This division of responsibilities can result in different standards of force protection, as highlighted by the Riyadh terrorist bombing of the Office of the Program Manager, Saudi Army National Guard, in November 1995.

While Secretary Perry has taken the initial steps in the development and assignment of responsibility for force protection policy, there are still areas that we need to address at the doctrinal and operational level. The following recommendations are areas where we can affect the development of doctrine and initiate change to enhance our current force protection readiness posture.

o There is a need to assign proponentcy for the development of force protection doctrine from which to base tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP). Until doctrine is established, service components and separate units will continue to develop their own. Priority and funding will differ among organizations, as can be expected, but as a minimum doctrine ought to be developed within each service component for a baseline level of standardization. An example is III Corps Force Protection Handbook, which identifies their TTP through a standing operating procedures handbook, thereby establishing uniformity among III Corps units and soldiers as a minimum. Though not the optimum solution, it's a starting point.

o Improve the use of available intelligence and intelligence collection capabilities. We must ensure that the forces on the ground have the appropriate intelligence analysts that are capable of wading through the enormous intelligence data fed from the strategic level and determining the credibility of information. If we are to be pro-active in our approach to terrorism or a threat, we must be able to pre-empt or disrupt their planned actions. There will always be a direct correlation between intelligence and force protection posture/readiness. For our soldier's welfare, they need to be accurate.

o Train soldiers prior to deployment in support of peace operations, in force protection tactics and techniques so they may readily adapt to their environment. The training program

developed at the Combat Maneuver Training Center acclimated soldiers prior to deployment to the tactical and social situations they may encounter in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Their situational awareness was honed to focus on their environment based on a variety of scenarios and role players. Preliminary leader after action report comments directly attribute this stressful training to their soldiers' ability to cope and adapt to the demanding environment. It is appropriate at this point to address the doctrinal issue again, "what are the training standards for our armed forces?" This question must be answered before we can progress to a uniformed program of instruction for force protection.

- o Upon deployment, or ideally prior to deployment in support of a peace operation, the controlling headquarters should establish a committee or working group that focuses on force protection issues for the command. Additionally, ensure this committee or working group has the commander's attention to establish credibility. Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR has proven the working group's value in an objective organization that is able to address force protection issues from an all encompassing vantage point through a variety of staff members.

- o Ensuring soldiers fully understand the rules of engagement (ROE) prior to deployment is essential. During peace missions, often our soldiers are required to patrol independently in decentralized operations. They must be trained and disciplined

to be able to make those decisions on the utilization of force under stressful conditions. The absolute requirement to maintain our impartiality in the conflict adds additional emphasis to the need for ROE training at all levels of the organization. Couple that with the presence of United Nations forces being co-located, and we have a very precarious situation where ROE may be subject to different interpretations.

- o Ensure force protection funding remains a high priority within the service components and major commands. We need to appropriate available security related technology that is being manufactured as combat multipliers. Force protection can be resource intensive in terms of soldiers on guard. Any technology that can supplement a soldier's eyes and ears is a security enhancement and possibly frees a soldier for mission type duties.

- o Conduct vulnerability assessments. Vulnerability assessments by the command or outside agencies provide a second critical look at potential weak areas that may have been missed on initial assessments. They identify weaknesses in physical security plans, programs, and structures and should be conducted on an established periodical basis.

- o Fully integrate force protection operations into our training culture. Force protection measures are not unique to contingency operations. They are just as important in garrison as well as the tactical environment. Tactics, techniques and procedures must be established and integrated into our training

programs so they become second-nature to our soldiers. The standard construction of barriers, bunkers, and structures; the situational awareness enhancement; the soldier's familiarity of the environment and the threat; knowledge of the ROE; practicing of force protection TTPs; all add up to soldiers who can not only survive their peace operations environment, but possess the confidence to excel under stressful conditions.

Conclusions

All indications are that the President will continue to support peace operations in the future as a way to influence world events and project U.S. power abroad. As the world's only military power to with the capability to rapidly deploy strategic forces, the U.S. remains critical to the United Nations as a partner for peace. In light of that, the American public will demand that we as leaders remain vigilant in the protection of our soldiers as we do the nation's bidding in foreign lands.

In order to be successful in peace operations, our leaders' first and foremost concerns must be force protection, safety, and mission accomplishment. This is not only a basic leadership philosophy...the public demands it.

The lessons learned from the Beirut and Khobar Tower bombings provide us with the tools and baseline from which to build and strengthen our doctrine. Force protection doctrine has to be more than an obligatory two to three paragraphs in our warfighting manuals.

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